

What does Monkey Mind* Stereotypical Thinking have to do with Memorial Day? Plenty! — Elizabeth Berry

*Monkey Mind from Chinese *xinyuan* and Sino-Japanese *shin'en*—*distracting mind chatter*



Many of us are ruled by our Monkey Mind

My wish for this Memorial Day is that more people will stop and think

The word “stereotype” was invented by Firmin Didot in the world of printing; it was originally a duplicate impression of an original typographical element, used for printing instead of the original. American journalist Walter Lippmann coined the metaphor, calling a stereotype a “picture in our heads” saying, “Whether right or wrong (...) imagination is shaped by the pictures seen.

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Stereotypes are literally pictures that our monkey mind holds in storage. We are so certain of their accuracy that we act on them without thinking further.

Many people will argue to the death to defend their stereotypes. In fact, stereotypes are stored somewhere in our long-term memory and we pull them out as needed—either to reinforce them or to get information from them on which we act. The problem is that stereotypes are incomplete information, misinformation that are based on the specific to the general—the one to the all.

The mind is efficient and it categories things for us so we don't have to think. I've read that stereotypical thinking is postulated to have been our first type of thinking to develop—thinking in pictures. A man sees a wild beast tear up a friend and he stores a picture of that beast in his mind. The next time he sees the beast, he recalls that picture and runs like hell the other way. So stereotypical thinking at least at one point in our evolution may have served a purpose—with a few exceptions, perhaps not so much any more.

Stereotypes are formed in one of two ways:

1) **We form pictures in our minds by personal encounters with people and objects.** The problem is that like any photograph, these memories are two-dimensional snapshots from one frozen moment in time, and like photographs, they often lack important detail. For example, that Chinese woman that cuts us off on the freeway. She might be in a hurry to get somewhere important. That might be the first time and last time in her life that she will ever cut someone off on the highway in her life. But what do we do? We store a memory of that woman and label it “Chinese women are horrible drivers.” If we have a similar experience within the next few days when we get behind a Japanese man who is driving too slow on the freeway, we store that picture with the Chinese lady and it becomes: “All Asians are horrible drivers.” Thus on the basis of our highly limited experience we form a stereotype and call it the truth about millions of Asian drivers now and forever. Did I say “dumb” or “dumber”?



2) **We are manipulated by pictures presented by propagandists that reinforce and encourage stereotypical thinking.** War posters, even from the so-called “Cold” War of the fifties when the threat of communism and the “yellow hordes” from Asia were used to scare us into not minding, or even seeing all the profits that war contractors like General Electric and Dow Chemical with their agent orange and other chemicals were making and passing along the profits to our elected officials. Even today most Americans don’t get the connection between our elected officials(whether Democrat or Republican) consistent votes to continue wars and their stock portfolios.

More than a quarter of senators and congressmen from both parties have invested at least \$196 million of their own money in companies doing business with the Department of Defense (DoD) that profit from the death and destruction in Iraq. According to the latest reports, 151 members of Congress invested close to a quarter-billion in companies that received defense contracts of at least \$5 million in 2006. These companies got more than \$275.6 billion from the government in 2006, or \$755 million per day, according to FedSpending.org, a website of the watchdog group OMB Watch.

The problem with stereotypical thinking is that it can harm us and others

I was thinking about that this morning as I wrote up a “day in history report” for May 30, 1972 in Tel Aviv when members of the Japanese Red Army pulled off a massacre in the Lod Airport. Three Japanese terrorists, dressed in business suits and carrying violin cases with assault weapons walked into the airport and killed 24 people and injured 78 others. At that time, the airport security had been trained to only look out for the stereotypical Arabs.

That was 40 years ago. I'm sure the Israelis learned some lessons from this incident, but obviously many US officials have not. Just last fall we had a candidate from Florida who made a stupid video supporting profiling (another word for stereotyping). **Go here to see the Dan Fanelli you tube: Does this Look like a terrorist? .**

Sometimes in airports today I hear passengers making comments like "Why are they checking that grandpa?" At that point, I often wish I could open up my computer and show them a link to one of my posts. **The Majority of Terrorist in our Midst are White Males—not Swarthy Arabs.** As far as "grandpas" are concerned, maybe you never heard of Earl Albert Moore age 65 pipe bomb maker, James von Brunn age 89 white supremacist who killed a black guard at the Jewish Holocaust center in Washington.

Many people today think of suicide bombers as being only Muslims. That too is a stereotype. In fact, it may have even been a white American male by the name of Andrew P. Kehoe who taught them how to do it. The **Bath School disaster** is the name given to three bombings in Bath Township, Michigan on May 18, 1927, which killed 38 elementary school children, two teachers, four other adults and the bomber himself; at least 58 people were injured. Most of the victims were children in the second to sixth grades (7–12 years of age) attending the Bath Consolidated School. Their deaths constitute the deadliest act of mass murder in a school in U.S. history.

Another element often necessary to the stereotyping process is that we see the person or object as different or alien to our culture. Thus in America religious terrorists are not Christian, they are Muslims. In the Middle East these murders are often viewed, particularly by the fundamentalists as "holy warriors." Both viewpoints are, of course, wrong. A terrorist is a terrorist—regardless their religion. Murdering or harming another in the name of anything even God is an act of terrorism. Killing another in the name of God is the ultimate perversion of the mind—to assume that you know what God is thinking.

PEACE ON THIS MEMORIAL DAY. THE BEST WAY TO HONOR THE DEAD IS TO HONOR THE LIVING AND BUILD PEACE.

No Congressional member who owns stock in any war contractor

corporation should be allowed to represent the American people. The reasons should be more than obvious. But in case they are not: It is because these people are war profiteers and have a vested interest in war.

[Excerpts from my upcoming book: "Backstage with the Hidden Persuaders"]